

Nighthawks, are preparing to depart for the Republic of Korea. Their 4-month deployment is part of an ongoing measure to maintain a credible deterrent posture and presence in the region and demonstrates the continued U.S. commitment towards fulfilling security responsibilities throughout the Western Pacific.

The F-117A, and the personnel that fly and maintain them, continue to be vital to our national security strategy. This is why I am so pleased the Senate Armed Services Committee included my bill to restrict retirement of any Nighthawks in fiscal year 2006 in the committee passed bill.

We must maintain the ability to deliver precision munitions onto time sensitive, high value targets, wherever and whenever the need arises. And I am so proud of the men and women from New Mexico that take on this very dangerous but important mission in service to their country. They are all superstars that deserve the heartfelt appreciation of a grateful Nation.

AFRO-LATINOS

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise today to bring attention to the situation of Afro-Latinos throughout Latin America, in the hopes that we can encourage more action on this issue. From Colombia to Brazil to the Dominican Republic to Ecuador, persons of African descent continue to experience racial discrimination and remain among the poorest and most marginalized groups in the entire region. While recent positive steps have been taken in some areas—for example, giving land titles to Afro-Colombians and passing explicit anti-discrimination legislation in Brazil—much work still needs to be done to ensure that this is the beginning of an ongoing process of reform, not the end.

In places where civil conflict has taken hold, Afro-Latinos are much more likely to become victims of violence or refugees in their own countries. In many areas, Afro-Latinos are also subject to aggression by local police forces at far greater rates than those perceived to be white. Access to health services is another serious concern, and recent studies have shown that Afro-Latino communities are at greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

In the last Congress, there was not one mention in the Senate of the millions of Afro-Latinos who continue to experience this widespread discrimination and socioeconomic marginalization. Now is the time for more action on this issue, not less. Emerging civil society groups are growing stronger throughout many countries in Latin America, and this growth should be encouraged as it presents important opportunities for partnerships and collaboration. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate and House on this critical concern in the coming months, and I believe that together we can and will make a difference.

REACH OUT AND READ

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today I rise in support of the Reach Out and Read program. Reach Out and Read is a program that promotes early literacy by educating doctors and parents about the importance of reading aloud. Reach Out and Read facilitates reading by giving books to children at pediatric check-ups from six months to five years of age, with a special focus on children growing up in poverty. Children who are exposed to reading in their first years of life learn to love books at an early age—a love that often stays with them throughout their teenage and adult lives. They are also more likely to escape the many problems associated with illiteracy and reading difficulty, including school absenteeism and dropout, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy.

Reach Out and Read is active in more than 2,300 hospitals and health care centers in 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico. Two million children participate annually and 3.2 million new, developmentally appropriate books are given to family members.

There are 123 Reach Out and Read clinical locations in my State of Massachusetts. More than 116,000 children participate in Reach Out and Read and more than 200,000 books are distributed annually.

Reach Out and Read is unique. Funded both by both the Federal Government and private donations, it is a program with documented results. In 1998, the National Research Council released the much-acclaimed report, "Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children" which specifically cites Reach Out and Read as a program that effectively encourages young children to read. It is supported by the Department of Pediatrics at the Boston University School of Medicine and is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. We should all continue to support this very special program.

PONTIFICAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, TO THE WESTERN DIOCESE

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I take this opportunity to recognize the Pontifical Visit of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, to the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America during the month of June 2005. The Catholicos will visit the Western Diocese, headquartered in Burbank in my home State of California and travel around California from June 1 through 20. As the 132nd Catholicos of all Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II is spiritual leader to more than 7 million Armenian Apostolic Christians worldwide. I would also like to recognize the Western Diocese Primate, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, for his

good works on behalf of Armenian-Americans in California and the Western U.S.

This momentous occasion marks the second Pontifical visit of the Catholicos to the Western Diocese. The visit has been titled "The Renaissance of Faith" because it marks a source of spiritual inspiration and reawakening for Christian Armenians, whose faith is 1700 years old.

The Diocese of the Armenian Church, established 107 years ago in Worcester, MA, originally served Armenian churches in the United States and Canada. In 1927, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America was established by a directive from the Mother See. The establishment of the Western Diocese was an historic occasion, which marked the growth of a strong Armenian community in California and the Western United States.

The Western Diocese was originally headquartered in Fresno. In 1957, the headquarters were moved to Los Angeles. In 1994, the headquarters were damaged by the Northridge Earthquake. Later that year, the Diocesan Assembly decided to purchase a new Diocesan Headquarters. In 1997, the Western Diocese officially moved into a multipurpose complex located in Burbank, CA, which will be the future site of the Mother Cathedral. This Pontifical visit is even more special because the Catholicos will be there in June to bless the foundation stones at the groundbreaking of the new Mother Cathedral.

The visit is also appropriately timed to coincide with two important anniversaries—the 90th Anniversary of the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and the 1600th Anniversary of the creation of the Armenian alphabet. Earlier this year, I joined my Armenian friends in commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, which was the first genocide of the 20th century.

The Armenian alphabet, along with the Armenian language, has contributed immensely to the vibrant continuity of Armenian culture. The Catholicos' visit will highlight these two anniversaries and further empower Armenians in the Western Diocese to continue their long-fought efforts for justice.

I am honored to recognize this historic and joyous visit, which will strengthen ties between Armenia and Armenians in California. I know that His Holiness Karekin II will have a very special visit to California and I wish the Armenian community in California an increased sense of purpose and inspiration.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO LOVELAND, COLORADO, POLICE CHIEF TOM WAGONER

• Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the chief of police of

Loveland, CO, Tom Wagoner, for his distinguished career of service to the people of Loveland.

Chief Wagoner was born in Minnesota and raised in eastern Illinois. After spending 2 years in the Army, he became a police officer and joined the Greeley, CO, Police Department in 1979. Having served in several positions in the Greeley Police Department, Chief Wagoner left Colorado in 1987 to be the police chief in Tullahoma, TN.

Fortunately, it was not long before Chief Wagoner came back to Colorado to serve as the police chief in my hometown of Loveland in 1989. The city of Loveland has greatly benefited from his leadership. Over the course of his tenure, he made many additions to the department, including a mounted patrol unit, a motorcycle unit, a community policing program, and a new radio system. Chief Wagoner also presided over a move to a new police headquarters in 2002 and has ensured that the Loveland Police Department has received national accreditation since 1992.

I thank Chief Wagoner for over 15 years of service to the citizens of Loveland. He leaves behind a difficult set of shoes to fill, and he will be missed.●

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN THORACIC SOCIETY

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, on the occasion of its 100th anniversary, I am proud to recognize and honor the American Thoracic Society for its continuing commitment to the prevention and treatment of respiratory disease.

While respiratory disease may not pose the same public threat that it did 100 years ago, we cannot forget, nor overlook, the need to continue our fight against such debilitating illnesses. It is imperative that we continue to explore the causes and effects of respiratory disease as well as educating the public here and abroad.

Since its establishment in 1905, the American Thoracic Society has demonstrated an unyielding determination to reduce the number of deaths from respiratory disorder and acute illness. I commend ATS for its dedication to the cause.

ATS not only directs its attention to the care and treatment of respiratory disease patients, it also places preventive practices at the forefront of its mission. Through extensive scientific research, ATS has established itself as a leader in the discovery of new information and knowledge. Furthermore, ATS has developed numerous educational programs, as well as several medical journals, to help keep both the medical community and the public up to date on new scientific information and innovative practices.

Finally, ATS has established itself as a leading advocate of respiratory research, paving the way for unprecedented developments in the treatment of respiratory disease. As host of the

world's leading respiratory medicine conference, which provides doctors and scientists the opportunity to share their successes with specialists from all over the world, ATS has truly confirmed its status as a leader in the medical community.

Over the years, ATS has grown to meet the needs of the changing world in which we live, while never losing sight of its basic goals of prevention and treatment. I congratulate the American Thoracic Society on its 100 years of outstanding research and innovation.●

BRIGADIER GENERAL GERVIS A. PARKERSON

● Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, Brigadier General Gervis Parkerson is a lifelong resident of Mississippi, having graduated from Gulfport High School in 1967 and Mississippi State University in 1971. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps following his graduation from college and completed Officer Candidate School at Quantico, VA. He graduated from Naval Flight School in 1972 and served as a carrier based pilot in the Marine Corps until 1976.

He is a Master Aviator with over 7000 flight hours, having flown in the T-42A, U-8F, U-21A, CH-53D, T-34, T-28, OH-6A, UH-1H, and the C-7A with the United States Marine Corps, and the 1108th AVCRAD.

After leaving active duty, Brigadier General Parkerson returned to Mississippi and was employed in the private sector. In 1980, he joined the Mississippi Army National Guard with the 114th Area Support Group, and in 1981 began full-time duty as Aircraft Maintenance Officer, HHC 114th Area Support Group, in Hattiesburg, MS.

He assumed command of the 1108th Aviation Classification Repair Activity Depot, in 1994 at the rank of Colonel. As Commander, he directed the maintenance of over 500 aircraft within the 9 southeastern States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The AVCRAD also provided sustainment maintenance to the Army Aviation and Missile Command's Corpus Christi Army Depot, as well as mobilization of non-deployable assets for the Army National Guard.

Brigadier General Parkerson has received several awards and decorations including the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Army Reserve Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Overseas Service Medal, and Meritorious Unit Citation. He has also received the Mississippi Magnolia Cross, one of the highest medals awarded to a member of the Armed Forces of the United States of America by the Governor of the State of Mississippi. Additionally, he was awarded the Bronze and Silver Order of Saint Michael from the Army Aviation Association of America for his superb dedication to Army Aviation.

Brigadier General Parkerson has been married to his wife, Brenda, for the past 26 years and they are the proud parents of two grown children, Beau and Leah.

Through his personal contributions and effective leadership, Brigadier General Parkerson has greatly strengthened the United States Army and the Mississippi National Guard while reflecting great honor upon himself, his family, and those with whom he has served.

Under the authority of the State of Mississippi, he will be promoted to the rank of Brigadier General, and placed on the retirement list after 34 years of dedicated commissioned service. On behalf of the United States Senate, I would like to thank Brigadier General Parkerson for his honorable and tireless service to this Nation, and congratulate him on completion of an outstanding and successful career.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:35 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1224. An act to repeal the prohibition on the payment of interest on demand deposits, and for other purposes.

At 2:38 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hays, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2419. An act making appropriations for energy and water development for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 2419. An act making appropriations for energy and water development for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Appropriations.